

Ringling Around and About in the Huntingdon District



Issue No 31: July 2025

Editor – Phillip George



St Peter & St Paul's Church Alconbury

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Training Centres and Simulators - PG

In my opinion there is no doubting the benefits offered by training centres. Our association has three, each giving opportunities for learning bell handling through to advanced method ringling.

Training centres bring together experienced ringers to support other ringers at all stages. During a recent visit to the MRDC (Mancroft Ringling Discovery Centre in Norwich)(highly recommended) Sheila and I had the opportunity to ring surprise major with group of like-minded ringers. We arrived at the end of a session in bell control for a ringer using the simulator. This demonstrates the versatility of this type of facility.

Similarly, St Clements church in Cambridge offers a range of services from drop-in sessions, dedicated bell handling sessions and quarter peals. Stretham Ringling Centre in the Ely District is similar and so too the Walsoken Training Hub in the Wisbech District.

As well as having appropriate permission and suitable facilities such as good accessibility, toilets, easy going bells (or dumbbells) and a simulator, one of the major considerations is the very considerable resource needed to organise and run regular events. This is perhaps why, although the Hunts District has been approached about opening a training centre, it has not been able to do so.

But your own tower could become an informal training facility serving local ringers and visitors using dedicated "extra" practices. The advantages of this include: more rope time for ringers, silenced bells don't disturb the neighbours and bell control skills can be developed away from the weekly practice.

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Ringling Meeting at Little Paxton – 19th July - PG

It was a little after 3.00pm and thirty-three ringers had gathered to ring the lovely light six (7 1/4cwt) at St James church Little Paxton.

It was standing room only in the ringing room but Cathy Moulton and Andrew Smith made sure that everyone rang. The methods included call changes, Grandsire, Little Bob, Cambridge, Kent & Oxford spliced and St Simons & St Martins and Plain Bob.



We were pleased to welcome three ringers from Cambridge and some new members elect of the Association.

At 4.30pm we all enjoyed a hearty tea of home-made sandwiches and cake, with lashings of tea. It was a leisurely affair and a lovely time to meet new friends and do a bit of networking.

After tea, a business meeting was held, the most important item on the agenda being the election of five new members. Paul Chandler from Godmanchester, and from Alconbury, Ann Ladlow, David Robinson, Chris D'Silva and Barbara D'Silva. Membership certificates were presented to those present. Congratulations to all new members.



The meeting adjourned and we left for home in bright sunshine, having enjoyed lots of ringing, good company, cheerful smiles and the welcoming fellowship of the ringing community.

Our thanks to Mary Parnham, tower captain, for making all the local arrangements, and with local ringers and helpers for providing an excellent tea; and to Caroline Stevens our district secretary.



New members

L-R: David Robinson, Chris D'Silva and Barbara D'Silva (Alconbury). Paul Chandler (Godmanchester)

Moving on at Holywell – Caroline Stevens

Thirteen ringers attended the moving on practice at Holywell on Saturday morning of the 5th July.

Touches of Plain Bob Minor, Little Bob Minor, Kent and Oxford Treble Bob, Cambridge Surprise were rung, some of those spliced too. Thank you to RM Andrew for running the ringing, and to Holywell for hosting.

Roger Beaman writes, "A very useful and well-run practice, which was a pleasure to be part of. Well attended, without being overwhelmed, and I think most attendees got some very useful experience from it. Plain courses of Cambridge and Norwich, along with a Bob course of the former. An opportunity to have a go at touches of Kent and Oxford. Little and Plain spliced. And a good opportunity for people to practice calling touches of Plain Bob. A very productive 2 hours."



Performance Ringing during July

A visiting band started the month's performance ringing with three quarter peals on Tuesday the 1st, starting with Turramurra S. and Rutland S. back-to-back at **Hemingford Grey**, and then on to **Bluntisham** where they rang Lessness S.

There was over a week's gap until Single Grandsire Doubles Bob Bob Minor was rung at **Holywell** on the 11th. This method was first rung in Ringing Room using simulated on the 29th September 2020, and it is believed to be now rung on tower bells for the first time.

A smart quarter peal in 5 methods was rung at **Great Gransden** on the 14th, and on the 16th a quarter of Grandsire Doubles was rung at **Great Paxton**.

The next quarter was not rung until Sunday the 27th when Plain Bob Doubles was rung at **Little Paxton**, on the occasion of the retirement of Canon Annette Reed, Vicar of the Benefice of The Paxtons with Southoe and Diddington, 2006 to 2025. A clip of the ringing can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePaxtonsBenefice>

There is usually a quarter at **Godmanchester** every month for evensong, and I can't believe that they've done it again. this time ringing on Sunday the 27th when they rang 'I Can't Believe It's Not Real Yorkshire Surprise Major.' This method is a minor variation on Yorkshire S Major and was the first in the method for all. Also on the 27th was a quarter of mixed doubles in two methods at **Hemingford Grey**, rung for the service of evensong.

There have been various miscellaneous performances too. At **Caxton** on the 16th a 540 of Bourne S. was rung in memory of Geoff Perryman (Cambridge District), and on the 17th a 112 of Plain Bob Triples was rung during practice at **Gamlingay** to welcome Cass Boocock back to ringing after a two-year forced absence.

480s of Plain Bob Doubles were rung on practice nights of the 24th and 31st at **Great Gransden**, each with multiple conductors.



Gt Gransden QP L-R: Catherina, James, Sheila, Becca, Tom, Phillip



Gamlingay – welcome back Cass: Andrew, Martin, Cass, Jacqueline, Sharon, Bill, John, Mel

COMING UP NEXT!

Saturday 16th August:

District Social Event – Hilton Village Hall – details to be advised

Saturday 6th September

Moving On – Bluntisham 10:00am - 12noon

An opportunity to ring slightly more advanced methods. Details to be advised

Success for the Fen Tigers at RWNYC Birmingham 2025!

What was the Main Event happening in Birmingham last weekend? Apart from Black Sabbath, ELO, and the Test Match it was the RWNYC 15th Year!

There were 37 teams (!) overall and it was the biggest RWNYC to be hold so far with 5 different competitions.

The Ely DA Fen Tigers took 12 young ringers to make up two teams. Advanced Call Changes (six bells) held at Erdington Parish Church. They came joint 7th out of 12 teams.

Method (six bell) at Edgbaston They came joint 4th out of 11 teams.

We are super proud to say that the Call Change Band were placed higher than last year, and it was the first time that this current group of Young Ringers had entered in the Method Section.

Once again, it was an amazing day for our young ringers who were given the opportunity to ring on peals of 10 and 12 bells, try handbells, challenge themselves with ringing heavy and light bells (including several mini rings) and of course ring on the 16 bells at St Martin's in the Bullring.

Our Young Ringers were supported by their Families who came along to cheer them on and help with transport. Lesley and I would like to thank them as well as all the local bands in the Ely DA who have supported our practices over the year. Finally, our thanks once again to the family of Jim Skillings who kindly paid for the entry fees and our bright orange t-shirts.



The whole squad.



Fen Tigers – call change team
Elsa Holden (mid top), Haydn Soki North (mid lower) and Josh Crutch (right lower)



Fen Tigers – change ringing team

Lesley Boyle, one of the leaders wrote, “Dee Smith and I were so proud of them! During the competition ringing I was up in the tower with the Call Changes band as 'row counter' (Dee went up with the Methods band) and saw the look of steely grit and determination in their eyes as they set off ringing the piece.

They were fabulous! Great that Huntingdon District supplied half the band - please get going with training up more new ringers as, before you know it, these guys will be grown up!



All ringers were awarded a striking contest medal

Many thanks must go to Dee Smith and Lesley Boyle (Fen Tigers Leaders) for their dedication, experience, encouragement, enthusiasm, enabling and mentoring. PG

The church of St Peter & St Paul Alconbury is in a pleasant setting in the pretty village just off the A1 north of Huntingdon. The ringers hold their practice on Monday evenings from 7.30 until 9.00 and Sheila and I had been invited to meet the ringers and for me to present some EDA membership certificates.

The ringers are mostly new to the art and have been taught by tower captain Mark George with his wife Lynne. On arrival at the tower we heard the bells being raised in pairs and we were warmly welcomed by the ringers, some of whom we had met at the district meeting at Lt Paxton a couple of weeks previously.

The bells, newly tuned and rehung by Taylors in 2023, are a lovely 11cwt six, rung from the ground floor. During the evening they were rung mostly to Rounds with some basic call changes.

To extend their learning experience some of the ringers are able to attend The St. Clements training centre in Cambridge, but all the team are progressing well.

We all enjoyed tea and biscuits at half-time, which was an opportunity to chat with everyone and share in their enthusiasm for ringing. Membership certificates were presented to Ann Ladlow, Leslie Gabriolek and Steve Cox. So far this year six ringers from Alconbury have been elected as members of the EDA and another, Eileen King, will be elected in November.

Thanks to all the ringers for your hospitality.



L-R: Leslie, Steve, Ann



L-R: Mark, David, Chris, Leslie, Barbara, Steve, Eileen, Lynne, Ann, Paul

Training Centres – continued from front page

Of course, there are some prerequisites. First of all, permission from the church officers to hold an extra practice, although this should be easily obtained. Second, and key to the whole idea, installing a simulator and a laptop to run an app which relays the simulated sound of bells.

To make them worthwhile sims should be used at least weekly, and a lot of effort made in support of your ringers. Considerations: **Time** - arranging regular training schedules: **Training**- high standards: **Commitment** – work with your ringers, focus on their needs: **Responsibility** - *own the challenge, accept responsibility* for new ringers and *mentor them continually*: **Progress** - not all ringers will be able to go on to be change-ringers but local ringers can significantly contribute to the development and wellbeing of ringing as a whole. Don't ignore them. Encourage everyone: **Teamwork** - *develop your team*, everyone is important: **Communication** – always keep everyone informed.

At Great Gransden we have been holding weekly daytime sim practices since 2022 based on this model. We upgraded our sim to all 6-bells at that time. It is essentially for our local ringers, but we also welcome some ringers from other towers. The benefits are tangible in developing teamwork, inclusivity and working together. And our quality of ringing has gradually improved. If you think your tower could benefit from installing a sim and you would like further information, please contact me. PG

Who Introduced Ringing to Cambridgeshire? - Jez Bottley

In May 2025 I attended the funeral of an old family friend at Arreton on the Isle of Wight.

Thankfully, I don't go to many funerals but was pleasantly surprised to hear the bells as we approached the church, however only 5 of the 6 were being rung. Later as we left the church, the 6th ringer did appear and was a little sheepish about getting the time wrong!

I chatted to some of the ringers and they highlighted a significant tomb in the churchyard which belongs to William Raynor (1750 to 1823). This chap apparently brought bellringing, as we know it, to the Isle of Wight. On top of the tomb is a metal plaque that reads,

*"Skilled in the mystery of the pleasing peal
Which few can know, and fewer still reveal,
Whether with little bells or bells sublime,
To split a moment to the truth of time.
Time, so oft truly beat at length o'ercame,
Yet shall this tribute long preserve his name."*



Jez outside
Arreton church



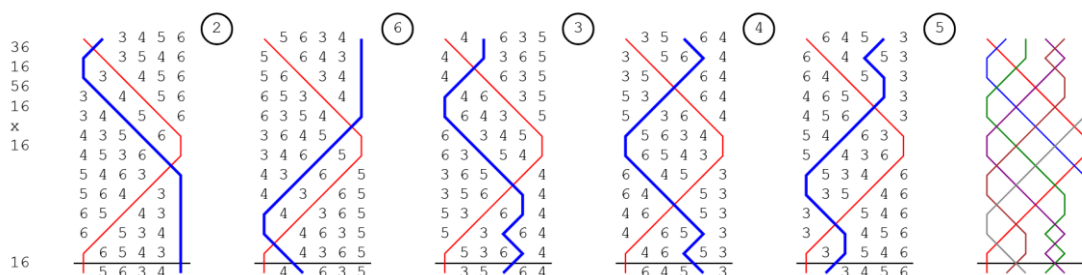
Due to its significance, the tomb has been maintained by the Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild.

Arreton church tower, albeit relatively small, has some of the biggest buttresses I've seen! St. George's church at Arreton is significant to me as I rang my first peal here in 1979 but this is the first time I had heard of William Raynor!

So, I wonder who established full circle ringing in Cambridgeshire and has that person been honoured in some way?

One answer: Fabian Stedman has long been associated with ringing in Cambridge, although that has now been disputed. (Foolish Youths and Substantial Rewards – Gareth Davies 2024).

Change ringing developed around the late 16th and early 17th century. Stedman devised his principle in the mid 1600s. PG



Single Grandsire Doubles Bob Bob Minor
Rung on the 11th July at Holywell

Great Gransden School Children Visit the tower! - PG

As the last week of term approached, Barnabas Oley CofE School in Great Gransden were preparing for Founders Day on Friday the 18th July.

The school was founded by the Rev Barnabas Oley, fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge (now Clare College), and vicar at Great Gransden from 1633 until his death in 1685. He also built the vicarage house and village almshouses.



This year, between the many rehearsals for this special day, headteacher Mrs Downes scheduled a 90 minute slot for 20 Year-6 students to visit the bell tower on the 16th.

It was a walk into history for the children when we showed them the clock which was installed in 1683 to mark Oley's golden jubilee year, and then the bells, one of which (No5 dated 1658), he would certainly have heard ring.

Whilst in the belfry No 4 bell was rung (silenced) and this was also demonstrated in the ringing room using the simulator for sound. Handbells were rung excellently to Rounds by the children when they had finished their tower tour.

We had divided the class into groups of four, plus teachers, and the guides, Sheila George, Tricia Williams and I fielded their many interesting questions. By some logistical genius of ferrying people up and down the tower we all ended up in the ringing room where everyone had chance to chime the bells in a multifarious cacophony of sound.

On leaving the tower everyone signed our visitors book before stickers and sweets were handed out.

Thank you, Mrs Downes and teacher Mrs Hussey for enabling this to happen, and to the children for their energy and enthusiasm. It was a great afternoon!

(photos taken and published with appropriate permissions)



Group 1



Group 2



Group 3



Group 4

THE BACK PAGE

Membership Update – *Roger Beaman, Membership Secretary*

Given that we are now over halfway through the year and typically we see fewer new membership applications during the second half of the year, I thought I'd update everyone as to how the numbers are looking so far.

We ended last year with 206 members. The new online renewal process was always going to be a challenge for some members with, in particular, the likely loss of a number of senior members who have not been ringing for many years and no longer taking part in any form of ringing activity. We actually lost 15 members, which was less than I anticipated, but gained one through a transfer from another district. So far this year we have elected 13 new members and have a further 3 applications pending. This will put us up to 209 in total.

The addition of 16 new members so far this year (including those pending election) compares well with recent previous years. In 2024 we elected 17 new members; 12 in 2023; and 6 in 2022.

Looking across the whole of Ely DA there are still 62 members who have yet to renew this year (none in Hunts) and I will be very surprised if many actually do. In addition, some 44 members have resigned during the year. Against that are 45 new members elected or pending election. The current membership by district, including 4 pending election, is Cambridge 240, Ely 142, Hunts 209, Wisbech 87 giving a total of 678. This total is down by 61 from last year, which is driven entirely by the members from last year who have yet to either renew or resign (primarily in Ely and Cambs Districts).

Overall, things are looking relatively healthy in Hunts District. I am confident that we now have a more realistic membership total that actually reflects those who are involved in ringing. More ringers are always very welcome and if we can add 15 - 20 new members per year we will most likely continue to grow.

District Secretary

As previously announced, Caroline wishes to stand down as District Secretary at the ADM in January 2026. Here is a summary of some of the work involved. It might be possible to share some of the duties, and we can discuss this at the district committee, but if you think you would be interested in this voluntary position, please let us know. It is an **exciting opportunity** to take a **leading role** in the district.

Working with the president to plan agendas for meetings (quarterly plus 2 committee meetings). Plan the ringing programme for the year liaising with the ringing masters and training officer. Liaise with towers for monthly meetings. Actively communicate events with members, mostly via email. Provide updates for the association annual report, Attend association committee meetings x2 (shared with district committee rep).

It sounds like a lot of work but it is spread over the year, and you will **receive support** from the district president and other committee members.

Contact Caroline for further info - secretary@huntbells.org.uk

Photographs will be published only where the Editor is satisfied that consent has been obtained from someone who has legal responsibility for the child or vulnerable adult.

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